



**STATE OF CONNECTICUT**  
*DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES*  
*A Healthcare Service Agency*

Dannel P. Malloy  
Governor

Patricia A. Rehmer, MSN  
Commissioner

**Testimony of Patricia A. Rehmer, MSN, Commissioner**  
**Department of Mental Health & Addiction Services**  
**Before the Appropriations Committee**  
**March 6, 2015**

Good afternoon, Senator Bye, Representative Walker and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee. I am Patricia A. Rehmer, Commissioner of the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services (DMHAS). As you know, DMHAS, as a health care service agency, focuses on assisting more than 110,000 adults over the age of 18 annually from communities throughout Connecticut - to recover and sustain their health in response to a psychiatric disability and/or substance use disorder. The DMHAS system of care is a public/private partnership. It includes DMHAS' operated services – three (3) hospitals and six (6) local mental health centers – and contracted partnerships with the state's general hospitals and over 165 private non-profit, community-based agencies statewide.

I am pleased to be here to discuss the Governor's proposed biennium budget for FY 2016 and FY 2017. As Connecticut continues to slowly recover economically and deal with budgetary challenges, the Department remains committed to its core mission of promoting wellness, preventing illness and strengthening a recovery-oriented system of care for people with serious psychiatric and substance use conditions. This budget contains additional resources to allow us to effectively meet the goals of our mission as stated above. This biennium budget continues to focus on funding for community services rather than inpatient care as we move our system forward and advance recovery-oriented services. The DMHAS proposed budget presented to you by the Governor is one that not only protects core services that are in place, but also adds funding that is critical to the system.

The Governor's recommended budget for DMHAS dedicates \$10.3 million in FY 2016 and an increase of \$26.1 million, over the FY 2015 appropriation, in FY 2017 to support increased caseload and utilization growth in several DMHAS programs. The proposed budget also provides new funding for supportive housing and residential services for clients requiring intensive supports. These programs include: 1) the Young Adult Services program; 2) the Medicaid Home and Community Based Waiver program; 3) the Discharge program

which supports services for individuals declared discharge-ready to leave Connecticut Valley Hospital; 4) the Governor's Mental Health Initiative for difficult to place populations; and 5) new funding to support the Governor's new Zero: 2016 and Second Chance Society initiatives through additional wrap-around services.

Let me take a moment to describe some of these significant recommendations:

- The recommended budget increases Young Adult Services (YAS) funding by \$2.7 million in each year of the biennium. These funds will support 25 net new young adult clients in each year transitioning from the Department of Children and Families to DMHAS in order to assure their services and supports continue. Expansion of Young Adult Services is in direct correlation to the increasing referrals of extremely impaired, high-risk young adults, ages 18-25 that have been identified with a severe and persistent psychiatric disability. YAS staff is actively engaging approximately 250 young adults involved with the Department of Children and Families in transition planning. These new resources will assure these young adults will have access to clinical, residential, employment, education and social supports which are necessary to achieve their individual life goals, improve their quality of life, promote and sustain community living.
- Funding is included for additional placements under the Medicaid Waiver for persons with serious mental illness in the amount \$3.1 million in FY 2016 and an additional \$4.2 million in FY 2017. These funds will provide needed community living services and supports for adults with serious mental health illness. Additional capacity under this waiver is necessitated by the planned expansion of the Money Follows the Person (MFP) program administered by DSS. Under a federal agreement, we need to accommodate an increased number of clients who will be transitioning off MFP, while maintaining capacity for two types of clients; those in the emergency departments diverted into community settings whom in the past would have been admitted into nursing homes and clients currently in nursing homes who do not qualify for the waiver but are better served in the community.
- Funding increases of \$3.4 million to the Discharge program are proposed in FY 2016 for 31 clients and an additional \$2.2 million in FY 2017 for 19 clients to fund community living services and supports for adults transitioning from inpatient settings to various specialized residential community settings. These dollars will allow us to continue to move individuals out of our state operated inpatient settings and meet the demands of the settlement agreement with the Department of Justice (DOJ).

- Funding to support a 4% growth rate each year in the biennium in the General Assistance Managed Care account in the amount of \$1.1 million in each year.
- Annualized funding is also recommended as part of the Governor's Mental Health Initiative in the amount of \$3.0 million in FY 2016 for further enhancement of residential and transitional services to difficult to place populations and \$500,000 in wrap around services for 100 units of supportive housing.
- New funding of \$1.0 million in FY 2016 and an additional \$1.0 million in FY 2017 to provide wrap around services for supportive housing units as part of the Governor's Second Chance Society initiative and \$1.0 million in each year of the biennium for wrap around services for chronically homeless individuals as part of the Zero: 2016 initiative.

In addition to the above recommendations proposed in the budget for DMHAS, there are several saving proposals recommended as the state continues to battle budgetary challenges as the Connecticut economy continues to slowly recover. This budget consolidates substance abuse programming by transferring funds and five positions from the Department of Veterans' Affairs to DMHAS in the amount of \$352,000. The budget annualizes the FY 2015 rescissions in the amount of \$4.5 million, reduces funding for research activities at Connecticut Mental Health Center in the amount of \$785,000, eliminates \$736,000 in general fund support for Regional Action Councils and Governor's Prevention Partnership and reduces Pre-Trial Education account funding for these programs by \$466,840, reduces \$400,000 of funding for Legal Services and eliminates the Gatekeeper program in the amount of \$718,000. These are difficult choices to make as we continue to move our mental health system forward.

Thank you again for the opportunity to address the Committee today. I believe that the budget before you will help address many of the needs of those we serve. We will be happy to take any questions you may have at this time.